



SIS419-009 Philanthropy Lab (3 credits)

Section 1: Faculty Information

Stephanie Fischer

Executive-in-Residence

Executive Director, Experiential Learning

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Office Hours:

You are welcome to connect with me in person or by phone or zoom. To book your time, please sign up at <https://fischer1.youcanbook.me>.

In addition to making an appointment to meet with me during or outside office hours, you can reach me by email. If your email brings up a question requiring discussion, I will ask you to schedule a meeting. I will respond to emails within 24 hours during the week and potentially less frequently over the weekend.

Teaching Assistant: Ana Gaston

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Section 2: Course Information

Course Description

Philanthropy has played and continues to play a key role virtually every aspect of international service. Foundation and individual giving built and supported the United Nations, funded the development of the rice variety that makes up 60 percent of the world's rice production, and invests in climate change mitigation technologies and services for victims of hate crimes. Philanthropic giving can also create negligible or even adverse effects that are often not considered or mitigated. In this course, you will gain a deep understanding of strategic, impactful philanthropy and develop the skills and competencies required to make thoughtful and informed funding decisions. Thanks to the generous support of a donor, you will bridge theory and practice through the experiential component of the course. The culminating activity will involve student teams directing approximately \$40,000-\$70,000 in grant funding to nonprofits you have strategically selected and carefully vetted.

We will choose 501c3 organizations established at least two years ago. Each student will be a member of a Giving Team that will research a particular topic, examine causes and approaches to addressing the problem, and identify and assess organizations to consider for our donations. After each Giving Team presents its grant recommendations, each student in the class will vote individually on the final grant disbursements, which can go to 1-4 organizations. We will also allocate a percentage of our funding to the other organizations through site visits.

Capstone Learning Outcomes



In this course, you will develop the following skills and knowledge:

- 1. Application.** Build on prior knowledge, skills, or dispositions in a new context.
- 2. Synthesis.** Identify and execute a significant project that addresses a substantive disciplinary or professional concern.
- 3. Reflection.** Articulate the knowledge, skills, or dispositions gained during the student's undergraduate education or used in the project.

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Identify, research, and evaluate nonprofit organizations
- Identify the key historical influences, trends and approaches of contemporary philanthropy.
- Recognize community needs and approaches employed to address them
- Develop persuasive, evidence-based communication materials and presentations to advocate for specific nonprofits organizations.

Section 3: Grading & Assessment

Assignments

Assignment 1: Individual \$10 Giving Challenge Reflection Essay	9/2/24	5%
Assignment 2: Individual Philanthropist Interview and Reflection	9/8/24	5%
Assignment 3: Individual Individual Giving Narrative	9/15/24	5%
Assignment 4: Team Giving Team Charter and Philosophy	9/29/24	10%
Assignment 5: Team Problem and Organization Research Memo	10/13/24	15%
Assignment 6: Team Site Visit and Interview Notes	11/3/24	10%
Assignment 7: Team Grant Recommendation Report and Presentation	11/17/24	20%
Assignment 8: Individual	10/23 and	+ or – 3pts

Peer Review (mid-term and final)	12/1	
Assignment 9: Individual Letter to future you (Canvas) & Giving Goal Submission (PL Portal)	12/3/24 5pm	10%
Participation and Attendance	Ongoing	20%

Assignment Overview

Assignment 1: \$10 Giving Challenge Reflection Essay

In the first day of class you will receive \$10 to do whatever “good” you choose. In your essay (500 words maximum) you should explain what you did, why you did it, and what was the impact of this donation. In hindsight, do you have any ideas how you could have done more good with this money? What might you do if you had more time?

Assignment 2: Philanthropist Interviews and Reflection

Interview two people you admire as philanthropists, using a broad definition-- a person who donates time, money, experience, skills or talent to help others. In this essay (maximum 500 words), explore what they do, why they do it, what they get out of it, and what impact they make. How do their lived experiences and identities affect their giving? Compare and contrast the two philanthropists and clearly identify anything you have learned from speaking with them that we should consider in our own journey as philanthropists.

Assignment 3: Individual Giving Narrative

Looking back, consider how you have been impacted by philanthropy (e.g., school, sports, health, laws/policies, hobbies) and the problems in the world that you most want to see change. Refer back to readings and different ways to think about effective philanthropy, look forward to identify your giving interests for this class and the guiding principles you plan to use when you identify and evaluate donation recipients. This essay can be up to 500 words, plus your survey submission.

Assignment 4: Team Charter and Giving Team Philosophy

Using the template, draft your Giving Team’s mission, values, priority focus areas, and giving principles as well as your norms for working together. Your peer review at the end of the semester will reference this document and identify how well you stuck by (or evolved for the better) your norms, mission, and values.

Assignment 5: Problem and Organization Research Memo

In this 3-4 page memo, you will explore the problem your Giving Team wants to address, the underlying causes of it (clearly defined in separate paragraphs) and approaches that have been used to address it (consider various actors- government, philanthropy, citizen sector, and private sector). Each member of the team will interview two subject matter experts who are not employees of a nonprofit you might consider giving to. I am happy to connect you with people and resources. Base your conclusions on well-cited data and analysis. Include a landscape analysis that identifies

organizations working on this problem and descriptions of the top four organizations (including their theories of change) you plan to consider for site visits and why.

Assignment 6: Site Visits and Interviews Notes

Pick two organizations for site visits/interviews and complete templates.

Assignment 7: Grant Recommendation Report and Presentation

Each Giving Team will create a report and accompanying presentation to recommend the organization(s) you decide to move forward for final donation consideration. These reports and presentations have dual purposes. They are the way you will share with the other Giving Teams your journey to select the organization, providing data, your critical thinking process and results. They will also be new assets for the organizations to use for their own fundraising purposes. Your presentation should refer to your team's giving philosophy (including any evolution of this philosophy), your understanding of the problem you decided to address, compare and contrast different approaches to this problem, provide information about the four organizations you considered and a compelling case for why you picked the organization(s) you decided to bring forward.

Assignment 8: Peer Review (mid term and final)

You will complete a peer review during the mid-point and end of the semester. The quality of feedback given and received will increase or decrease your total team grade.

- Mid-point review: You will provide feedback on each of your teammates regarding what they are doing well and what they could do more or better to be an even better member of your team. Consider both *what* they are doing and *how* they do it. Also reflect on your own performance – what you should continue doing as well as what you should stop or change.
- End-point review: You will note any improvements or reductions in the quality of your teammates' and your contributions to the team, and allocate 100 "contribution points" among all team members, including yourself.

Assignment 9: Letter to Future You (Canvas) and Giving Goal Submission (Philanthropy Lab Portal)

Consider what you have learned in this course and how you will integrate this learning into your life going forward. This letter should be addressed to the "you" of 2034 and cover the key lessons you learned in this class and any goals or intentions you would like to remind yourself. Each piece of learning, advice and goal/intention should have a separate paragraph or bullet point dedicated to explaining it. This letter should be 500-1,000 words.

Preparation, Participation and Attendance

Because this is a highly interactive seminar, your preparation, attendance, and participation are crucial to your learning and to the experience of your classmates.

- *Preparation and Participation:* Do the readings and class assignments on time and have something thoughtful and insightful to say about them. For certain classes there will be reading questions, and in other cases you should identify questions and answer them. Participation quality and quantity is important. I expect students to contribute relevant comments that build on and elevate our discussion while making space for others' ideas and perspectives. Our final donation deliberation is a great time to improve your participation grade.
- *Attendance:* Any absence without accommodation will result in the reduction of your Participation and Attendance grade. Joining class late will also adversely affect your grade. Note: If you will be late or absent from class, please email me before class.
- *Notable Giver Discussion Lead:* Once during the semester, you and an assigned partner will pick a notable giver for ten minutes of class discussion. I will post a list on Canvas of some people to consider, and you are welcome to identify your own person not on the list. We will define a notable giver as someone of whom you can find at least three different resources (e.g., something they wrote, article about them) that provide information about their giving. Your discussion leadership should include the following, provided in PowerPoint slides to be submitted on Canvas prior to class.
 - **Three or more sources** you used (noting any credibility issues);
 - **Three or more points of data** about this person's giving (e.g., quote by them about their philosophy on giving or why they give, amount they have given); and
 - **One or more insights** you gained. These can be things that you want to emulate or not.

Grading

Specific criteria for evaluation will be specified when assignments are given. Instructions for all assignments will be posted on your course page on Canvas. I will post updates or clarifications of assignments as needed, so please don't hesitate to ask if you are unclear about expectations or need extra guidance.

Course Grading Scale

Percentage	Mark	Description
100 – 95	A	Excellent
94 – 90	A-	
89 – 87	B+	
86 – 83	B	Very good

82 – 80	B-	
79 – 77	C+	
76 – 73	C	Satisfactory
72 – 70	C-	
69 – 67	D	Unsatisfactory / Poor
Below 67	F	Unsatisfactory / Fail

Decimal points at or above .56 will be rounded up to the nearest whole number.

Section 4: Weekly Schedule

This course will be run as a seminar, with much of the work happening in teams. Assignments below are noted in advance of the week’s class session (e.g., the week 2 assignment is due on 9/2, so that you are prepared to discuss in our 9/4 class session). Weekly readings are posted on Canvas.

Week 1 – Course Introduction

Week 2 – Introduction to and History of Philanthropy

Assignment

\$10 Challenge, due 9/2

Week 3 – Philanthropy Challenges and Opportunities

Assignment

Philanthropist Interview and Reflection, due 9/8

Week 4 – Issue Identification

Speaker

[Andrew Peters](#), External Affairs Senior Manager,
Children's Equity Fund

Assignment

Individual Giving Narrative Due, 9/15

Week 5 – Understanding Problems and Those You Will Serve, Teamwork

Assignment

Work with Teams on Charter and Philosophy

Week 6 – Approaches to Solving Problems Through Philanthropy

Assignment

Giving Team Charter and Philosophy 9/29

Week 7 – Research and Due Diligence

Speaker

[Mailee Walker](#), Executive Director Claneil Foundation

Site Visit

Assignment

Problem and Organization Research

Week 8 – Site Visit Preparation

Assignment

Problem and Organization Desk Research Memo, 10/13

Week 9 – Site Visits

Speaker

[Maureen Greenwood-Basken](#), Program Director
Global Children’s Rights, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

Assignment

Site Visits

Week 10 – Site Visits

Readings

[Daphe Rowe](#), President and Founder Pembroke
Philanthropy Advisors

Assignment

Site Visits

Week 11 – Group Work

Assignment

Site Visit and Interview Notes, due 11/3

Week 12 – No Class, teams sign up for consultations with professor

Assignment

Sign up with your team for a coaching session as you finalize your Grant Recommendation and report

Week 13 – Decision Making

Assignment

Grant Recommendation Report and Presentation; Donation Deliberations (may extend after class)

Week 14 – THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

Week 15 – Giving Ceremony

Assignment

Letter to future you (Canvas) & Giving Goal Submission (PL Portal)

Section 6: Course Expectations, Requirements, and Policies

Class Expectations

Be professional, respectful, engaged and curious: we will talk about what this means on the first day of class and develop our group norms.

Policy for Use on Generative AI: Generative AI has been compared to a calculator or using google—it is a tool that can be very helpful and is here to stay. As such, I want to promote the

responsible use of AI and require documentation of any use of it. If you use AI in an assignment, upload a separate document in the Canvas Assignment Submission that includes the tool you used, how you used it (e.g., prompts you provided) and the output. Submitting direct AI generation output as an assignment or not documenting your use of AI is an academic integrity violation.

Section 7: University-Wide Policies

Academic Integrity Code

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the university's [Academic Integrity Code](#). By registering for this course, students have acknowledged their awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and they are obliged to become familiar with their rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary action will be taken should violations occur. This includes cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism.

A [short guide for students](#) on how to meet the expectations of the AU's Academic Integrity Code.

Diversity and Inclusion

American University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy or parenting, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity and expression, family responsibilities, political affiliation, source of income, veteran status, an individual's genetic information or any other bases under applicable federal and local laws. The University expressly prohibits any form of discriminatory harassment including sexual harassment, dating and domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, and stalking.

Faculty members are required to report discrimination, harassment or sexual misconduct to the Office of Equity and Title IX if they witness it or become aware of it. There are four confidential resources on campus if students wish to speak to someone who is not required to report: Counseling Center, victim advocates in OASIS, medical providers in the Student Health Center, and the Chaplain in the Kay Spiritual Life Center. For more [information](#) or to [directly make a report](#), please visit the [Office of Equity and Title IX website](#).

Review the complete [Discrimination and Non-Title IX Sexual Misconduct Policy](#).

Student Code of Conduct

The central commitment of American University is the development of thoughtful, responsible human beings in the context of a challenging yet supportive academic community. The [Student Code of Conduct](#) is designed to benefit the American University community and to assist in forming the highest standards of ethics and morals among its members. By registering for this course, students have acknowledged their awareness of the Student Code of Conduct, and they are obliged to become familiar with their rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code.

Additional Student Policies

For a comprehensive list of policies involving students, [click here](#).

Section 8: Academic Support Services

Academic Alerts

Each instructor's objective is to do what they can to support you and the Academic Alert is one way to do this. The Academic Alert system is not punitive and does not appear on your transcript or academic record. Academic Alerts are intended to alert you of potential problems while you still have an opportunity to address them. It's a mechanism by which instructors connect students through their academic advisor to university support resources that may be of help (e.g., tutoring, academic coaching, etc.). It is also an opportunity for faculty to let you know what changes you can make to achieve success in the course and engage in a learning partnership with them. This is a way to open conversation between you, the instructor, and the advisor so that together you can work out how you can achieve your educational goals.

Please know: Academic difficulty is common, and these interventions can help you improve your performance!

Academic Support and Access Center

The [Academic Support and Access Center \(ASAC\)](#) supports the academic development and educational goals of all American University students and is committed to providing access for individuals with disabilities within the university's diverse community.

Academic Support and Learning Resources

The ASAC also hosts a variety of supports for students such as:

- [Academic Coaching](#): 1-on-1 studying and planning strategy sessions.
- [Academic Resource Library](#): Tips for learning, studying, and more.
- [Writing Center](#): Offers skilled peer to peer coaching for students at any point in the writing process.
- [Supplemental Instruction](#): Academic peer support from students who have already excelled in difficult classes current students are taking.

Library Resources

All Bender Library resources can be accessed [here](#). The library offers tutorials and access to research librarians. Please contact Associate Librarian [Sarah Burns Gilchrist](#) who specializes in International Studies if you want help with researching a topic or assignment or would like an orientation on how to find resources in the library. She can also be reached at 202-885-3181 or book an appointment

with her [here](#).

Get Help from a Research Librarian: A research librarian can help you find high-quality information for your research projects and can save you time. For a quick question, librarians are available on chat 24/7. You can also [request a personal meeting](#) with a subject specialist librarian.

Section 9: Student Support Services

Center for Diversity & Inclusion (CDI)

CDI is dedicated to enhancing LGBTQ, multicultural, first-generation, and women's experiences on campus and to advancing AU's commitment to respecting and valuing diversity by serving as a resource and liaison to students, staff, and faculty on issues of equity through education, outreach, and advocacy. It is located on the 2nd floor of Mary Graydon Center (202-885-3651, MGC 201 & 202).

The Office of the Dean of Students

[The Office of the Dean of Students](#) supports student learning through programs and services that promote growth and development, communicate the values and standards of the AU community, and advocate for students' needs.

Services offered:

- Help with personal difficulties such as hospitalization, injury, extended illness, family problems or mental health concerns that affect one's academic success. Students wishing to take a medical leave of absence must provide documentation to the [Dean of Students Office](#) supporting such action and must also meet with the Dean of Students prior to returning from a leave of absence.
- Free and confidential [Psychological Services](#) for a wide variety of concerns as well as [Group Therapy](#) options.
- [You@american](#) is American University's student portal for mental and physical health. Find tips and tools for everything from your mental and physical health to friendships and finding balance.
- [Well-Being programs and services](#) to support responsible decision-making and healthy lifestyles. Programs on important issues facing students such as alcohol and other drugs, sexual assault, body image, stress management and civility are being offered.
- Referrals to campus resources to support academic and personal success.

Disability Accommodations

To access academic accommodations due to a disability, students must follow [a three-step documentation process](#). Please note the priority deadlines for submitting accommodation requests and more information about [general documentation guidelines](#).

Call 202-885-3360 to schedule an appointment with an ASAC counselor.